

Safety & Health Fact Sheet



July 2000

Cal/OSHA Consultation Service

California Department of Industrial Relations

P. O. Box 420603 ■ San Francisco, CA 94142-0603

Revised Respirator Regulation

Cal/OSHA's revised regulation for worker use of respirators took effect November 1998. Section 5144 in Title 8, California Code of Regulations, details steps employers must take to assure safe and effective use of respirators in the workplace.

The revised regulation contains many new provisions. However, it is important to start with the requirements related to the most serious hazards in your workplace first.

The revised regulation applies to all workplace respirator use except tuberculosis (see Section 5147). Also, substance-specific standards (e.g. lead, asbestos, carcinogens) now reference parts of Section 5144. (Firefighters: see also Section 3409.)

Before resorting to use of respirators, hazardous airborne exposures must be controlled as far as feasible by engineering and work practice controls.

The Cal/OSHA respirator regulation can be accessed at the Division of Occupational Safety and Health section of the California Department of Industrial Relations website: <http://www.dir.ca.gov>

Elements of the comprehensive respirator program required of employers:

- All procedures in written form
- Selecting appropriate respirators
- Medical evaluation of respirator users
- Annual face seal fit testing
- Procedures for routine and emergency use
- Respirator cleaning and disinfection, storage, inspection, maintenance and repair
- Air quality for supplied air devices
- Annual employee training
- Periodic program evaluation

Getting Help

Improper use of respirators can result in worker injury and illness, fines and job shutdowns. For help in complying with Section 5144, contact:

Cal/OSHA Consultation Service

Employers can request at no cost an industrial hygienist to come to their worksite to determine if respirators are needed and which ones to use. The Consultation Service is independent of Cal/OSHA's enforcement unit and can be reached at:

Fresno 559-454-1295 San Bernardino 909-383-4567
Oakland 510-622-2891 San Diego 858-467-4071
Sacramento 916-263-0704 Santa Fe Springs 562-944-9366
Van Nuys 818-901-5754

Or toll-free **1-800-963-9424**

Important changes in the revised regulation:

- Voluntary use: provisions where employees use respirators and dust masks as a voluntary precaution. 5144(c)(2)
- Qualified program administrator required. 5144(c)(3)
- Atmospheres immediately dangerous to life or health: detailed specification of acceptable respirators. 5144(d)(2)
- End-of-service-life indicators: required for chemical cartridges, or the employer must have data showing acceptable change-out times. 5144(d)(3)(C)2.
- Employee medical evaluations: required prior to first use of a respirator, as well as follow-up medical examinations and allowing employees to discuss their medical questionnaire results with the administering health care provider. 5144(e)
- Powered air-purifying respirators: to be provided to employees unable to wear a negative pressure respirator for medical reasons. 5144(e)(6)(B)
- Annual face seal fit testing with test atmosphere: acceptable methods of fit testing are detailed in Appendix A. Fit testing is now also required for tight fitting air-supplied respirators. 5144(f)
- Facepiece seal checks: each time a tight fitting respirator is put on, its user must perform a seal check as specified in Appendix B-1. 5144(g)(1)(C)
- Atmospheres that may be immediately dangerous to life or health: detailed precautions to be taken. 5144(g)(3)
- Annual employee training: employees must be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills specific to the hazards and uses of respirators in their particular workplace, including emergency use. 5144(k)
- Ongoing respirator program evaluation: including periodic consultation with employees. 5144(l)

Internet resources

- Cal/OSHA <http://www.dir.ca.gov>
- Federal OSHA <http://www.osha.gov>
- NIOSH publications <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh> or phone 1-800-356-4674